1946 MOUNT DIABLO W6CX AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
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THE CARRIER

The monthly newsletter for the Mount Diablo Amateur Radio Club
Volume LVI • Number 12 • December 2007

A Ham's Night Before Christmas

by Gary Pearce, KN4AQ

Twas the night before Christmas,
And all through 2 meters,
Not a signal was keying up
Any repeaters.

The antennas reached up
From the tower, quite high,
To catch the weak signals
That bounced from the sky.

The children, Tech-Pluses,
Took their H-Ts to bed,
And dreamed of the day
They'd be Extras instead.

Mom put on her headphones,
I plugged in the key,
And we tuned 40 meters
For that rare ZK3.

When the meter was pegged
By a signal with power.
It smoked a small diode,
And, I swear, shook the tower.

I ran to the window
And peered at the sky,
To see what could generate
RF that high.

It was way in the distance,
But the moon made it gleam.
A flying sleigh, with an
Eight-element beam,

And a little old driver
Who looked slightly mean.
So I thought for a moment,
That it might be Wayne Green.

But no, it was Santa,
The Santa of Hams.
On a mission, this Christmas,
To clean up the bands.

He circled the tower,
Then stopped in his track,
And he slid down the coax
Right into the shack.

While Mom and I hid
Behind stacks of *CQ*,
This Santa of hamming
Knew just what to do.

He cleared off the shack desk
Of paper and parts,
And filled out all my late QSLs
For a start.

He ran copper braid,
Took a steel rod and pounded
It into the earth, till
The station was grounded.

He tightened loose fittings,
Resoldered connections,
Cranked down modulation,
Installed lightning protection.

Then, he reached really deep
In the bag that he brought,
And he pulled out a big box.
A new rig? I thought!

Yes! The Ultimate Station!
How could I deserve this?
Could it be all those hours
that I worked Public Service?

He hooked it all up
And in record time, quickly
Worked 100 countries,
All down on 160.

I should have been happy,
It was my call he sent.
But the cards and the postage
Will cost two month's rent!

He made final adjustments,
And left a card by the key:
"To Gary, from Santa Claus.
73."

Then he grabbed his H-T,
Looked me straight in the eye,
Punched a code on the pad,
And was gone with no good-bye.

I ran back to the station,
And the pileup was big,
But a card from St. Nick
Would be worth my new rig.

Oh, too late, for his final
came over the air.
It was copied all over.
It was heard everywhere.

The Ham's Santa exclaimed
What a ham might expect,
"Merry Christmas to all,
And to all, good DX!"

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November Meeting

Friday, December 21
7:30 pm
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church
1035 Carol Lane
Lafayette, CA

Meeting Program
Annual Holiday Dinner—*Please RSVP to Marty, w6mdh@arrl.net.*

V.E. Testing
There will be NO VE testing for the month of December.

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The Carrier is a monthly publication of the Mount Diablo Amateur Radio Club (MDARC). It is the policy of the editor to publish all material submitted by the membership provided such material is in good taste, relevant to amateur radio and of interest to MDARC members, and space is available. All material must be submitted to the editor by the last day of the month prior-to publication. Material is accepted on a first-in, first-out basis. Articles and other material may be submitted via Internet email to *carrier@mdarc.org* or delivered to the editor at the address listed in the club roster. Material will be accepted in plain ASCII or rich text format (RTF). Material may also be submitted as hardcopy.

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MDARC Club Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2007
Pacificon, San Ramon Marriott

President Marty Heyman, W6MDH, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

The minutes of the previous meeting, as printed in the Carrier, were approved.

VEC Jim Brunk, N6BHX, reported 3 new technicians, 1 general upgrade and one extra upgrade.

Treasurer Don Anthony, N6SIA, reported that we have $1053 in checking and $45,963 in CDs. This does not include income from Pacificon. As usual, there are adjustments to be made and minor issues to be settled with the hotel.

Emergency coordinator was not present, but RACES basic training on Saturday 17th was announced.

Technical committee, Trevor Hall, WA6JAU, reported that all is well with the repeaters. An ATV work party caused some minor problems which were later rectified. ATV is on the air, but not optimal yet—more work is needed and is in progress. A problem on the internet connection used by EchoIRLP was resolved by our service provider, but we are still sharing the link with other users, and so are subject to occasional packet-drops.

A vote was taken and approved on a proposal to spend an amount not to exceed $1,800 for supplies (mostly feedline and associated hardware) for the 2m voter installation at the East Bay Hills site. The club has two certified tower-climbers who will do the work. Insurance coverage will be verified before the work takes place.

The Christmas party will be held at 7pm on December 21st at the usual location with the usual menu.

Chuck Graham, KI6DCD, from the Salvation Army gave special thanks to Lauren and Liz Styles (WA6CIE and KG6HLV) for their support of the technician training classes sponsored by SATURN and MDARC. Certificates were also presented to Bob Green, K6GD; Marty, W6MDH (and Jordan); Trevor, WA6JAU; Chuck, KI6DCD; Steve Wagner, KA6SFT; and Larry Loomer, KI6LNB, for their contribution to the classes.

Marty, W6MDH, announced that a technician class will be run in Orinda, starting in January, on Tuesday evenings from 7:00PM to 9:00PM at the public conference room in the new Orinda City Office Building, and will be open to the public.

Membership chairman, Tom Deeble, KA6SIP, reported that he has made an early start on membership renewals, and that we now have have over 300 members.

Lauren WA6CIE presented John Stuart, KM6QX, with the raffle prize that he hadn't been able to receive at Pacificon because he was so busy running the show. John then talked about public service events, including the recent trail ride on Mt. Diablo, where the amateur operators assisted with two rescues.

Dick Brown, KT6X, reported lots of positive feedback from Pacificon attendees, and noted that the final review meeting would be taking place the following day, November 17th, so final numbers were not yet available.

Herbert Cole, KI6ATB, presented on Amateur Radio and CERT (Community Emergency Response Team).

Election results were announced. The only contested position was president, which was won by Jason Legate, W6SN. Other positions are Vice President—Dave Mulkearns, K6OH; Secretary—Paul Dickey, N6JOX; Treasurer—Don Anthony, N6SIA; Emergency Coordinator—Bob Green, K6GD; and Directors—Dave Gordon, N6SWE; Trevor Raty, KG6MDW; and Trevor Hall, WA6JAU. The director position previously held by Jason will need to be filled.

Herbert, KI6ATB, won the door-prize of a Yaesu FT-60R.

Iain McDonnell, K6IAM

1,000 Marbles

by Jeff Davis, KE9V

The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it's the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it's the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are most enjoyable.

A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the basement shack with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time. Let me tell you about it.

Walking into the shack, I flipped the switch on the Astron power supply. That fired up the dual-band mobile that is usually set on the local repeater frequency and it also brought my HF rig to life. In a few seconds, I was tuned to 7.040mhz, the QRP calling frequency. Early morning on 40 meters can be interesting and like fishing, you just never know what you might snag.

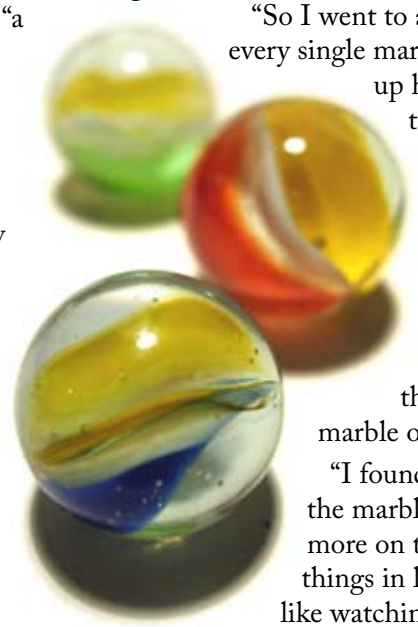
I turned the gain control up until the volume was comfortable, then I leaned back and scanned the local paper. Another shooting, another bombing, some terrorist group threatening retaliation, and the government debating a tax increase. Well, at least it's reassuring to see that the world hasn't changed since the evening news report the night before.

In the background, I heard a station calling "CQ FISTS". Before I have time to call him a VE3 with a booming signal calls him and so begins another QSO on 40 meters. Before long, that QSO has ended and another was underway.

After a quick coffee refill, I went back to the shack, put the headphones on, and begin tuning around. There was a strong signal on 7.035mhz calling CQ. I returned his call and made contact with a fellow in Kennebunk, Maine. We exchanged signal reports and proceeded to tell each other about our rigs, antennas, and the weather.

A few minutes more and my new friend told me he must QRT because he is meeting several of the local hams for breakfast. We signed off, with "73" to each other.

Then I turned the dial up into the phone portion of the band in order to listen to a Saturday morning swap net. Along the way, I came across an older sounding chap, with a tremendous signal and a golden voice. You know the kind, he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whoever he was talking with something about "a thousand marbles". I was intrigued and stopped to listen to what he had to say.



"Well Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital."

He continued, "let me tell you something Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities."

And that's when he began to explain his theory of a "thousand marbles."

"You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years."

"Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900 which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime. Now stick with me Tom, I'm getting to the important part."

By this point, I was completely hooked on this QSO. Forget the swap net, I wasn't moving from this frequency until I heard what the old man had to say.

"It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail", he went on, "and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy."

"So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round-up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic container right here in the shack next to my gear. Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away."

"I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight."

"Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container. I figure if I make

MDARC Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

October 1, 2007

Fuddruckers, 1940 N. Main St., Walnut Creek

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by President Marty Heyman.

Other Board Members present: Vice-President Dave Mulkearns, K6OH; Secretary Paul Dickey, N6JOX; Treasurer Don Anthony, N6SIA; and EC Bob Green, K6GD. Also present were Directors Trevor Hall, WA6JAU; Jason Legate, W6SN; and Trevor Raty, KG6MDW; as well as Membership Chairman Tom Deeble, KA6SIP.

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as published.

Treasurer Don Anthony reported $912.93 checkbook balance and $45,963.29 in CDs, not including recently received bills nor membership dues.

He received authorization from the Board to renew the World Radio classified ad for one year.

Committee Reports:

• Tom reported that the election ballots had been mailed and quite a few had already been returned. Tom also has revised the renewal form, and will hand them out at the meeting for those present and mail the rest.

• Bob noted that basic RACES training would be held the third Saturday this month. Marty advised that with the huge reduction in power to the 440 repeater, a new understanding will have to be in place between the County (OES) and MDARC. In addition, because of the "call" on MDARC members, a new MOU would be useful between the County and MDARC.

• Trevor Hall noted that a work party was on the hill last Sat. for the ATV repeater. Noted was a hum on all repeaters' audio; this will be the subject of the next work party this week. Also, the internet connection was down because of Red Cloud problems which are due to be fixed immediately by them. The Board voted to approve an allocation of $1620 to complete the voter installation on Vollmer. In addition, a carryover item in next year's budget will be the $1200 previously voted for the voter installation on Vaca.

New Business:

• Don presented a tentative budget for next year. After additions and notations, the Board approved the draft with revisions as a basis for the final budget for next year.

• Marty noted the receipt of a thank-you letter from Save Mount Diablo group, thanking the Club for its assistance with the trail and bicycle events.

• Marty confirmed the return of Pacificon to the San Ramon Marriott next year, under the Chairmanship of Dick Brown KT6X.

Marty adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Paul Dickey, N6JOX, Secretary

Editor's Exciter

by Jeremiah R. Blasi, K6BQ

Merry Christmas to all! I love this season, but it sure is busy! I apologize for the lateness of the *Carrier* this month, but I do believe that this has been the busiest Christmas season of my life! No doubt many could echo that sentiment.

Enjoy the time with family and friends, both on the air and otherwise. There are a number of good "hamming" opportunities this month. I plan to operate my KX1 QRP from Oklahoma on Straight Key Night—I hope to get some of you in the log! 73 de K6BQ

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it until next Saturday then I have been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time."

"It was nice to meet you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again here on the band. 73 Old Man, this is K9NZQ, clear and going QRT, good morning!"

You could have heard a pin drop on the band when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about. I had planned to work on the antenna that morning, and then I was going to meet up with a few hams to work on the next club newsletter.

Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. "C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast."

"What brought this on?" she asked with a smile. "Oh, nothing special, it's just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles."

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http://ke9v.net/stories/marbles.html

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Thursday 8:00 pm
General ATV Net

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Thursday, 7:00 pm

Central County	145.680 Simplex Jim Brunk, N6BHX
East County	146.535 Simplex Drew Hanson, KD6GLY
South County	146.355/+ (100 PL) Ed Ritchie, K6SFD
West County	145.110/- Steve Adams, KF6WNH

November Events

December 21	7:30 pm	**MDARC Monthly Meeting** *Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Lafayette*
December 31		**December Carrier Deadline**
January 7	7:00 pm	**MDARC Board Meeting** *Fuddrucker's, 1940 N. Main St., Walnut Creek*

The Carrier
Newsletter of the Mt. Diablo Amateur Radio Club
P.O. Box 23222
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523
www.mdarc.org

***Next Meeting—December 21*—Holiday Dinner**